METHOD AND COMPUTER SYSTEM FOR OPERATING AT LEAST TWO INTERCONNECTED CONTROL UNITS

Background Information

The present invention is directed to a method for operating at least two interconnected control units. The control units access sensor data and each execute at least one computer
5   program for controlling operational sequences, in particular in a vehicle. The control units exchange synchronization information.

The present invention is also directed to a computer system including at least two interconnected control units and a data
10 · transmission medium that connects the control units in order to exchange synchronization information among the control units. The control units access sensor data and each execute at least one computer program for controlling operational sequences, in particular in a vehicle. The data transmission
15   medium may also be used for transmitting pure useful data. The transmission of the data itself may be utilized as synchronization information.

From the motor vehicle sector, it is known to use control units to control and/or regulate various operational sequences
20   in a motor vehicle. The operational sequences to be controlled or regulated include, for example, the operation of an internal combustion engine (torque control, speed control, injection period control, etc.), of a steer-by-wire system, of a brake-by-wire system or of other X-by-wire systems, the
25   operation of safety-related functions (vehicle-stability control systems, antilock systems for the brakes, anti-slip control, active steering systems, active shock absorber systems, etc.), as well as comfort and convenience functions

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(air-conditioning, electrical seat adjustment, mirror actuation, or steering-wheel adjustment, electrical power-window control, sliding sunroof, etc.).

As the complexity of operational sequences to be controlled or
5   regulated increases, so does the complexity of the computer programs that are run on the control units for carrying out the control and, respectively, regulating functions, which ultimately also leads to higher demands on the control unit hardware. In particular, to fulfill the control and,
10 respectively, regulating functions, it is necessary to process an ever increasing amount of sensor signals that are made available by sensors via inputs to the control unit. However, the number of inputs of one control unit is limited. For that reason, to render possible the control and/or regulation of
15 advanced, complex operational sequences, the need exists to develop and market control units having a larger number of inputs. However, it is a complex and cost-intensive process to develop new control units. Such new developments would make available more diverse control units, but would decrease the
20 number of individual control units, so that additional costs would likewise be entailed for control units.

However, in the motor vehicle sector, in particular, low costs and associated standardized components, as well as high piece numbers are vitally important to the competitiveness of
25 components.

Today, conventional standard control units already have plugs with fewer terminals than would actually be required for complex operational sequences in motor vehicles. However, for the reasons described above, new control units having plugs
30 with more terminals will not be made available in the foreseeable future. Thus, it is essential to discover other

ways for controlling and/or regulating advanced, complex operational sequences using standard control units.

From the information technology sector, it is known to interlink a plurality of computers (for example, so-called

5   PCs, personal computers) via a data-transmission medium to a computer system. The data-transmission medium can be a wireless link, an optical connection or a wire-based connection. Data and information can be transmitted via the data-transmission medium in accordance with user-defined

10 protocols. Various computer programs having different functions are run on the computers of such distributed computer systems. The sequences on the individual computers are coordinated by a higher-level unit or by a computer (so-called master) of the computer system. For this purpose, it is

15 possible for the master to transmit synchronization information via the data-transmission medium to the other computers (co-called slaves). The distributed computer systems make possible a greater computing capacity with respect to computing power and memory capacity, and they are

20 characterized by substantial flexibility. In this context, the larger number of inputs and/or outputs of the computer system as compared to individual computers is unimportant. Moreover, input signals incoming at one computer of the computer system are not necessarily required at other computers as well and

25 are, therefore, also not transmitted by the one computer to the remaining computers. This is because various computer programs requiring, as a rule, different input signals are run on the computers.

Starting out from the related art described at the outset, it

30 is, therefore, the object of the present invention to design and refine a computer system in such a way that, with the aid of the computer system, even especially complex operational

sequences, as occur, for example, in a modern motor vehicle, will also be able to controlled and/or regulated simply and cost-effectively using conventional control units.

To achieve this objective, it is proposed on the basis of the method of the type mentioned at the outset that the control units execute the same computer program time-synchronously while using a settable time lag.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides for a plurality of control units to be linked via a data-transmission medium to a computer system. In this context, it is less a question of increasing the computing capacity than it is of increasing the number of available inputs for transmitting sensor data to the control units. The same computer programs are executed on all of the control units; i.e., the control units require the same input signals (sensor data) in order to be able perform the computations required for fulfilling the control and/or regulating function. In accordance with the present invention, however, not all sensor signals are fed via the inputs to all of the control units. Rather, the totality of the sensor data that is required by the computer programs and that is available is distributed among the individual control units of the computer system. The sensor data are then transmitted by this control unit via the data-transmission medium to the other control units of the computer system to make them available there as well.

The computer programs in the individual control units are executed synchronously, preferably time-synchronously, i.e., in strictly predefined time slices. However, a certain amount of time is required to transmit sensor data via the data-transmission medium during which the sensor data are not yet

available in all control units. Moreover, the sensor data are not simultaneously available on all control units, since the time required to transmit the sensor data varies. For example, the time period required depends on the distance between the transmitting and receiving control unit, on the capacity utilization of the data transmission medium, or on interference which can degrade the data transmission. Due to the requirement for data consistency in the control units of the computer system and in order to allow for the time delay needed to transmit the sensor data, the control units of the computer system are operated with a time lag, and the computer programs in the control units are not executed until after a settable dead time has elapsed following the beginning of a time slice. The dead time is utilized for exchanging the sensor data and, possibly, other data and information as well, among the control units. The time lag is either absolute, i.e., based on a superordinated time-slot pattern, is equal in magnitude for all control units of the computer system, or is a relative time lag, i.e., a time lag of individual control units relative to each other. Typically, it is a question of a relative time lag between a master control unit and slave control units of the computer system, as well as among the slave control units.

In a computer system in which the control units are interconnected via unidirectional data transmission media, approximately twice as much time is required for transmitting data as in a computer system having bidirectional transmission media. The time lag shall now be clarified based on the example of a computer system having two control units: Both control units receive individual (unit-specific) sensor data. The first control unit subsequently transfers the data received by the sensors to the second control unit. At this point, the sensor data received directly from the sensors, as

well as the sensor data received from the first control unit
are available there (at the second control unit), so that the
system may already begin with the pending time slice and
execution of the computer program. After receiving the sensor
data, the second control unit, in turn, transfers the sensor
data received from the sensors to the first control unit,
where, at this point, the system may begin with the pending
time slice and execution of the computer program with a time
delay relative to the first control unit. It is understood
that the results calculated by the two control units, such as
drive signals for actuators, must first be buffer-stored in an
intermediate memory, in order to then be jointly read out and
used to act on the actuators simultaneously.

The present invention has, moreover, the advantage that
standard control units having fewer inputs may be used for
controlling and/or regulating complex operational sequences,
as are increasingly required in motor vehicles, for example,
in order to process available sensor data to fulfill the
control and, respectively, regulating function. By linking the
control units to the computer system, other additional inputs
are virtually emulated for the individual control units. By
using standard control units, the costs may also be kept low
for controlling and/or regulating complex operational
sequences as well.

In the case that the sensor data are only available at one
single control unit, the present invention also makes it
possible to safeguard and ensure the data consistency in that
all control units of the computer system actually have the
same data available to them. If the analog sensor data were
fed to a plurality of control units of the computer system,
different limits for the A/D- (analog-digital) conversions
performed in the control units could result in different

digital values being present in the control units for the
sensor data, with the result that a data consistency would no
longer exist. The present invention is able to prevent this
since each sensor datum is only received by one single control
5   unit and is A/D converted there.

In accordance with one advantageous embodiment of the present
invention, the same sensor data are available in the control
units. Thus, the transfer of the sensor data among the control
units is carried out in such a way that, following the
10   transfer of the sensor data, the same sensor data are
available in their totality in all of the control units. In
this context, the same sensor data in the various control
units have identical values.

Due to the fact that all of the control units run the same
15   computer programs and perform the same calculations on the
basis of identical sensor data and, given functional control
units and, respectively, properly functioning computer
programs, would have to arrive at the same results, hardware
and/or software may be used for monitoring for correct
20   functioning. This may be accomplished, for example, by
comparing the ascertained results or by carrying out a
redundancy sampling (sampling n from m, n being < m).

One preferred specific embodiment of the present invention
provides for each of the control units to receive only one
25   portion of all sensor data from sensors and for the control
units to exchange sensor data, with the result that all sensor
data are available in each control unit. In this specific
embodiment, other additional inputs are virtually emulated for
the individual control units, so that, in spite of the use of
30   standard control units (having a limited number of inputs for
sensor signals), complex operational sequences may also be
controlled and/or regulated (while processing more sensor

signals than one single control unit has inputs). This enables the costs to also be kept low for controlling and/or regulating complex operational sequences as well.

The time lag is advantageously adjusted as a function of the time duration required for exchanging the sensor data among the control units. The time lag, which the control units observe when executing the computer programs, may be set in advance prior to operation of the computer system. However, the time lag is preferably adjusted during operation of the control units, thus during the computer system's run time.

In accordance with another advantageous embodiment of the present invention, the time lag is regulated as a function of the time duration required for exchanging the sensor data among the control units. The regulating process helps to ensure that the time lag is always kept as small as possible and, on the other hand, however, that the time lag is not selected to be too small which could result in the computer program execution being prematurely started although the sensor data are not yet available in all control units.

In accordance with another advantageous embodiment, the time lag is adjusted or regulated in a damped manner as a function of the time duration required for exchanging the sensor data among the control units. The damping process is implemented, for example, in that the time lag, respectively a time slice, is not shortened until it has become evident multiple times in succession that the time lag has actually been set to be too long, and that the data transmission was already clearly concluded prior to the time lag elapsing. Thus, not every variation in the transmission time leads immediately and directly to a variation in the time lag. By implementing this measure, the jitter of the transmission time is virtually attenuated.

Finally, the present invention provides for the control units to be synchronized solely by exchanging useful data via the data transmission media, without transmitting separate synchronization information. Here, it is a question, in

5   particular, of low-level synchronization. This is a self-optimizing time lag between the master and slaves (relative to the master). In contrast, a high-level synchronization is the synchronization of the multiplexer for establishing data consistency in the computation grids in question (master MUX =

10   slave MUX). In the method of the present invention, it is conceivable, for example, in addition to the useful data, for a time-slice counter (task counter) to be included as scheduling information in the messages which are transmitted via the data transmission media.

15   Starting out from the computer system of the type mentioned at the outset, another approach for achieving the objective of the present invention provides that control units execute the same computer program time-synchronously using a time lag that is adjustable by setting means.

20   In accordance with one advantageous embodiment, one of the control units is defined as a master control unit, and the remaining control units are defined as slave control units, the master control unit transmitting synchronization information to the slave control units. The synchronization

25   information is likewise preferably transmitted via data transmission media. The master control unit specifies a fixed, time-synchronous time-slot pattern that the slave control units must conform to. The computer programs, which, in principle, are the same for the master control unit and the

30   slave control unit, are merely set by a control-unit dongle in the cable harness for operation in the master or in the slave.

In accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, once the computer system is booted up, the slave control units are automatically synchronized to the time base of the master control unit. This means that some time (for

5   example 10 ms) after the computer system is booted up (restart, for example, after the system is switched on or after the occurrence of an error), after the synchronization process is concluded, the same time slices are started time-synchronously in the slaves as in the master. However, a

10   different time lag may be set in the individual control units, so that the control units may begin executing the computer program at different instants, although they work time-synchronously. The information required for the synchronization is transmitted via the data transmission

15   media.

An angularly synchronous time-slot pattern may be superposed on the time-synchronous execution of the computer programs, thereby making it possible to ensure, for example, that calculations that are dependent on the crankshaft angle of

20   rotation are able to be carried out in any case in a timely manner, independently of the time-synchronous time-slot pattern. The angularly synchronous time-slot pattern may be implemented, for example, by interrupt commands. Messages which have been transmitted in the angularly synchronous time-

25   slot pattern via the data transmission media have an especially high priority.

The present invention provides for only one portion of the sensors to be connected in each case to the control units, for the control units to receive only a portion of all sensor data

30   in each case, and for the control units to exchange sensor data via the data transmission medium, with the result that all sensor data are available in each control unit.

Means are preferably provided in the individual control units which make it possible to hold off on executing the computer programs time-synchronously while accessing the sensor data, until all up-to-date sensor data are available in each control

5   unit. These data must not necessarily be the last sensor data to be read in, but may also be the data from an earlier time slice. It is important, however, that all available sensor data be equal in age, i.e., they come from the same time slice. When the data come from a previous time slice, the data

10   processing by the computer programs is slightly delayed. In practice, however, this does not lead to any disadvantages whatsoever, since, typically, it is only a question of a delay of a few milliseconds. The stability of the controls is ensured in spite of the slight time delay.

15   In accordance with another advantageous embodiment of the present invention, each control unit is subdivided into a hardware level, a hardware driver level, and an application software level, the computer program for controlling the operational sequences running in the application software

20   level, and the sensor data being transmitted independently of the application software level in the hardware driver level. Thus, the present invention relates essentially to the hardware driver level where the transmitting and receiving via the data transmission media, as well as the buffer-storing of

25   the sensor data in the control units are implemented. The application software only accesses the buffer-stored sensor data regardless of whether it is a question of sensor data received directly from sensors or of sensor data received indirectly from other control units via the data transmission

30   media. The adjustment and, respectively, control of the time lag is also implemented in the hardware driver level.

In contrast, in multicomputer concepts under known methods heretofore, it was customary for the individual control units of the computer system to be interconnected on the functional level, i.e., the master-slave data bus coupling was on the

5   functional level. The result was that the data bus design was heavily dependent on the basic functionality of the system. Any change to the application software always necessitated adapting the data bus layout. This is overcome by the present invention. A stable data bus layout may be ensured even when

10   there is a change in the basic functionality.

In accordance with another preferred specific embodiment, the sensors are assigned to the control units and are linked to the control units assigned to them respectively in such a way that, during operation of the computer system, a substantially

15   uniform usage results on the average over time on the data transmission medium in both transmission directions. Of course, as the number of control units increases, this feature becomes more difficult to realize. When designing the computer system, however, care is taken to ensure that the control

20   units transmit sensor data more or less with the same frequency that they receive sensor data. If this is not followed, the result can be longer transmission times for the sensor data and a longer time lag than would actually be necessary.

25   The data transmission via the data transmission medium may follow any desired protocols. Conceivable, for example, is the use of the FireWire, ByteFlight, FlexRay, of the TTP (time triggered protocol) or of the LIN (local interconnect network) protocol. The data are advantageously transmitted, however,

30   via the data transmission medium in accordance with the CAN (controller area network) protocol.

Brief Description of the Drawing

Other features, possible applications, and advantages of the
present invention may be derived from the following
description of exemplary embodiments of the present invention,
which are illustrated in the drawing. In this context, all of
the described or represented features, alone or in any
combination, form the subject matter of the present invention,
regardless of their combination in the claims or their
antecedents, as well as regardless of their formulation and
representation in the specification and drawing, respectively.
The figures show:

Fig. 1   a computer system according to the present invention
            including two control units, which are
            interconnected via a data bus, in accordance with
            one preferred specific embodiment;

Fig. 2   various theoretical control unit levels of a control
            unit in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 3   a system diagram of a computer system according to
            the present invention including the employed sensor
            and actuator technology in accordance with a first
            preferred specific embodiment;

Fig. 4   a finite state machine for synchronizing the time
            slices in a slave control unit of the computer
            system according to the present invention;

Fig. 5   a computer system according to the present invention
            for illustrating the message and signal storage;

Fig. 6   a system diagram of a computer system according to
            the present invention including the employed sensor
            and actuator technology in accordance with a second
            preferred specific embodiment;

Fig. 7   a diagram including the breakdown and processing of
              the time slices in a computer system according to
              the present invention; and

Fig. 8   signal characteristics in a computer system
              according to the present invention for clarifying
              the data exchange between the master and slave of
              the computer system.

Detailed Description

As a preferred exemplary embodiment of the present invention,
reference is made in the following to the control of a
relatively complex internal combustion engine of a motor
vehicle having ten cylinders. The present invention may also
be utilized, however, for controlling and/or regulating any
other desired complex operational sequences, preferably in a
motor vehicle.

As illustrated in Figure 1, to control and/or regulate the
complex operational sequences in internal combustion engine 1,
a multicomputer system is used, which includes two control
units 2, 3 that are interconnected via a data transmission
medium designed as a bus system 4. The data are transmitted
via bus system 4 in accordance with the CAN (controller area
network) protocol.

Control units 2 is defined as a master control unit and the
other control unit 3 as a slave control unit. Master control
unit 2 transmits synchronization information to the slave
control unit. The synchronization information is transmitted
in the form of CAN messages via bus system 4. Master control
unit 2 specifies a fixed, time-synchronous time-slot pattern
that slave control unit 3 must conform to.

The same computer programs for fulfilling the normal operational control and/or regulation functions run on both control units 2, 3. The computer programs of the two control units 2, 3 essentially process the same input signals, which

5   are essentially composed of sensor data S1 through S10, as well as Sa through Sc and Sx through Sz. Sensor data S1 through S10 come from sensors which are located in the ten cylinders Z1 through Z10 of internal combustion engine 1. Sensor data Sa through Sc, as well as Sx through Sz come from

10   other sensors which may be situated in or on internal combustion engine 1 or at other locations in the motor vehicle.

Since each control unit 2, 3 has only a limited number of inputs for connecting sensors, in the computer system

15   according to the present invention, a portion of the sensors is linked to one control unit 2 and the other portion of the sensors to other control unit 3. In order that both control units 2, 3 have the same sensor data S1 through S10, Sa through Sc, Sx through Sz for executing the computer programs,

20   the received sensor data are exchanged between control units 2, 3 via bus system 4.

As illustrated in Figure 2, control units 2, 3 may be theoretically subdivided into a hardware level 5, a hardware driver level 6, and an application software level 7. In

25   hardware level 5, control units 2, 3 are linked to bus system 4. The computer programs for controlling internal combustion engine 1 run in application software level 7 of control units 2, 3. The transmission of sensor data S1 through S10, Sa through Sc, Sx through Sz via data bus 4 takes place

30   independently of application software level 7 and is coordinated in hardware driver level 6. Thus, the computer programs do not flag whether sensor data S1 through S10, Sa

through Sc, Sx through Sz processed by them were received
directly from a sensor or indirectly from another control unit
2, 3 via bus system 4. In other words, in accordance with the
present invention, additional inputs for sensor data, which
5   are not present as hardware, are emulated in control units 2,
3. Inputs for sensor data Sl through S5 and Sa through Sc are
realized as hardware in control unit 2 illustrated exemplarily
in Figure 2, whereas sensor data S6 through S10 and Sx through
Sz are received via data bus 4; i.e., the inputs for these
10   sensor data S6 through S10 and Sx through Sz are emulated.
Thus, a computer system which includes a plurality of simply
designed and cost-effective standard control units, which are
interconnected via data transmission media, may also be used
for controlling and/or regulating tasks of very complex
15   operational sequences, which require the processing of a
multiplicity of sensor data. Moreover, the same control unit
hardware may be used as the master and slave control unit.

When the various sensor data Sl through S10, Sa through Sc, Sx
through Sz are fed in each case only once to one of control
20   units 2, 3, then the inventive concept has a further
advantage. This advantage resides in the fact that the data
consistency is able to be safeguarded and ensured, and that
all control units 2, 3 of the computer system actually have
the same data available to them. If analog sensor data Sl
25   through S10, Sa through Sc, Sx through Sz were fed in parallel
to a plurality of control units 2, 3 of the computer system,
different limits for the A/D- (analog-digital) conversions
performed in control units 2, 3 could result in different
digital values being present in control units 2, 3 for the
30   sensor data, with the result that a data consistency would no
longer exist.

It takes time for sensor data S1 through S10, Sa through Sc, Sx through Sz to be exchanged via data bus 4 between control units 2, 3. To ensure that all required current sensor data are always available in the control units at the particular intended time slices, the time slices are started in control units 2, 3 using a settable time lag. The time lag observed when starting a time slice in a control unit 2, 3 depends on the required transmission time of the sensor data via bus system 4. The time slices in a control unit 3 are started with a time lag relative to the start of the time slices in the other control unit 2.

The same computer programs for fulfilling the normal operational control and/or regulation functions run in control units 2, 3, i.e., the same input signals (for example from the sensors) are processed, and the same output signals (for example for driving actuators) are determined. In the exemplary embodiment illustrated in Figure 1, however, only the output signals intended for actuators of cylinders Z1 through Z5 are transmitted from control unit 2 to output stages for these actuators (dashed line), whereas the output signals for cylinders Z6 through Z10 remain unused. In the same way, only the output signals intended for actuators of cylinders Z6 through Z10 are transmitted from control unit 3 to output stages for these actuators (dashed line), whereas the output signals for cylinders Z1 through Z5 remain unused.

The master-slave system according to the present invention for the engine control unit concept is designed for a plurality of control units 2, 3 which are interconnected via one CAN bus 4. Figure 3 shows a system diagram illustrating the sensor and actuator technology used which is identical to the sensor and actuator technology used in a second design (compare Figure 6). In the first concept according to the present invention,

as illustrated in Figure 3, master control unit 2 and slave control unit 3 are identical in design. The software used in the two control units 2, 3 is identical. Moreover, both control units 2, 3 are virtually identical in terms of function. They both fulfill the functions listed exemplarily in the following:

reference numeral 8:
- signal inputs
- sensor evaluation
- signal processing
- atmospheric-pressure sensor, only master control unit 2

reference numeral 9:
- starting torque
- idle-speed control
- torque control and limitation
- external torque intervention
- engine-smoothness regulator
- active surge damper
- calculation of start of pump delivery and of delivery period
- start-of-delivery correction (begin of injection period (BIP))
- boost-pressure control
  exhaust gas recirculation and throttle valve control
- exhaust gas aftertreatment
- fuel cooling control
- vehicle-speed controller or cruise control
- engine mount control
- air-conditioner compressor control
- glow-time control
- vehicle immobilizing system
- substitution functions

-   adjustment
-   afterrunning

reference numeral 10:

-   solenoid-valve final stages

5   reference numeral 11:

-   power output stages

reference numeral 12:

-   diagnostic
-   serial interface (only master control unit 2)
10 -   angular clock coupling (only slave control unit 3)
-   CAN communication

The sensors listed exemplarily in the following supply sensor
data to master control unit:

-   13.1: engine speed
15 -   13.2: engine speed (camshaft) and cylinder sensing
-   13.3: pedal-force sensor including low-idle switch and
    kickdown (forced downshift) (optionally second pedal-
    force sensor)
-   13.4: boost pressure
20 -   13.5: air temperature
-   13.6: fuel temperature
-   13.7: oil temperature
-   13.8: water temperature ½
-   13.9: exhaust-gas temperature ½
25 -   13.10: air mass
-   13.11: vehicle speed
-   13.12: GRA controller (cruise controller)
-   13.13: brake (2)
-   13.14: clutch
30 -   13.15: terminal 50
-   13.16: sheathed-element glow plug feedback signal

-     13.17: crash sensor
-     13.18: low-idle (fuel-tank empty) switch
-     13.19: tank cap open
-     13.20: auxiliary heater demand
-     13.21: auxiliary heater consumption signal
-     13.22: heat demand
-     13.23: rapeseed methyl sensor
-     13.24: particulate-filter differential pressure
-     13.25: lambda probe
-     13.26: generator load
-     13.27: air-conditioning control

The sensors listed exemplarily in the following supply sensor
data to slave control unit 3:
-     14.4: boost pressure
-     14.5: air temperature
-     14.6: fuel temperature
-     14.9: exhaust-gas temperature ½
-     14.10: air mass
-     14.16: sheathed-element glow plug feedback signal
-     14.24: particulate-filter differential pressure
-     14.25: lambda probe

Sensor data 15 (terminal 15) are available at both control
units 2, 3.

Via solenoid-valve final stages 10, control units 2, 3 control
the start of pump delivery and/or the delivery period of fuel
injectors 16. These injectors are designed, for example, as
pump-nozzle units or as common-rail injectors. As already
mentioned above, control unit 2 drives fuel injectors 16 of
cylinders Z1 through Z5, whereas control unit 3 drives those
of cylinders Z6 through Z10. This has the advantage that, for
each control unit 2, 3, it is not necessary to operate all,
but merely five solenoid-valve final stages. This makes it

possible to reduce the waste heat generated in control units 2, 3 by the final stages.

Via power output stages 11, control unit 2 drives actuators for the functions listed exemplarily in the following:

5 -   16.1: engine mounts
  -       16.2: fuel tank shut-off valve
  -       16.3: start controller ½
  -       16.4: generator shutoff
  -       16.5: air-conditioner demands
10 -   16.6: radiator cooling fan
  -       16.7: radiator thermostatic control
  -       16.8: fuel cooling
  -       16.9: fuel-pump relay
  -       16.10: fan control
15 -   16.11: glow plug relay
  -       16.12: electrical cooling-water pump
  -       16.13: catalyst heating
  -       16.14: additive metering pump
  -       16.15: auxiliary heater relay ½
20 -   16.16: auxiliary-heater burner control
  -       16.17: throttle-valve actuator
  -       16.18: exhaust gas recirculation positioner
  -       16.19: exhaust gas recirculation cooling
  -       16.20: boost-pressure controller
25 -   16.21: sheathed-element glow plug control unit

Via power output stages 11, control unit 3 drives actuators for the functions listed exemplarily in the following:
  -       17.11: glow plug relay
  -       17.13: catalyst heating
30 -   17.17: throttle-valve actuator
  -       17.18: exhaust gas recirculation positioner
  -       17.19: exhaust gas recirculation cooling

- 17.20: boost-pressure controller
- 17.21: sheathed-element glow plug control unit

Via a CAN data bus 4, data from a control unit of a traction control system / engine-drag-torque control 18.1, as well as

5 from a control unit of a transmission 18.2 are fed to master control unit 2.

In addition, signals are output by control unit 2 to the units mentioned exemplarily in the following:
- 19.1: diagnosis interface (ISO K) having a switching
10 element for triggering a diagnostics request
- 19.2: system lamp
- 19.3: MIL lamp (malfunction indicator lamp, trouble localizer light for onboard diagnostics)
- 19.4: speed coupling
15 - 19.5: speed indication (speed signal)
- 19.6: fuel-consumption indicator (fuel-consumption signal)

In the case of control unit 3, an appropriate diagnosis interface (ISO K) 20.1 having a switching element for
20 triggering a diagnostics request is provided.

In addition, data buses 4 are provided for a data exchange 21 between control units 2, 3. The data exchange is limited to sensor-signal raw values, digital signals, error statistics, controller values, and control statistics. Exchanged in
25 particular are:
- digital sensor data (following the A/D conversion of the analog sensor data fed by sensors 13, 14 to control units 2, 3)
- controller adjustment information
30 - control status information
- program synchronization information.

A primary relay of the motor vehicle is denoted in Figure 3 by reference numeral 22, the motor vehicle battery by 23.

For the most part, sensor system 13, 14 is linked to master control unit 2. Because of the completely dual-branch air and exhaust system of internal combustion engine 1, the signals, such as air mass 13.10, 14.10, air temperature 13.5, 14.5, boost pressure 13.4, 14.4, exhaust-gas temperature 13.9, 14.9, etc. are available separately at master 2 and slave 3. At the same time, however, these dual signals are consistently exchanged with each other, so that each control unit also has access to the input data of the other corresponding air branch. Moreover, a mechanism was developed for the dual sensor system's data exchange to enable a control unit 2, 3 to access the air mass, for example, and to automatically receive the air mass measured by sensor 13.10, 14.10 directly connected to control unit 2, 3. Via the access to the "external air mass", the air mass of other control unit 2, 3 that the control unit receives indirectly via data bus 4, is automatically accessed. In this way, equivalent reactions may be initiated synchronously in response to errors. Many sensors 13, 14, such as sheathed-element glow plugs 13.16, 14.16, are only detected locally in each control unit 2, 3 and are not exchanged, since they are of secondary importance to the entire system.

The time-synchronous calculations are initiated in master-control unit 2. This unit records the corresponding sensor data and transfers a portion of this raw sensor data to slave control unit 3. However, for reasons of data consistency, for the pending calculation, the unit utilizes the sensor data from the preceding, already adjusted time slice. Due to the substantial data volume, not all signals are able to be transmitted at once. The transfer is carried out as a packet

transmission (for example, always five or six CAN messages) every 10 ms from master 2 to slave 3 and vice versa. Of course, any other time-slot pattern may also be used.

If a data packet has been completely transferred to slave 3,
5   then a finite state machine recognizes this and starts the same time slice as in master 2. The finite state machine is used for synchronizing the time slices in slave 3 and is illustrated in Figure 4. The information regarding which time slice is being calculated at the moment is contained in each
10 CAN transmission packet. The received data are buffer-stored in an intermediate memory, the so-called shadow buffer (compare reference numeral 51 in Figure 5); the current time slice is calculated using identical data as master 2, stored in a so-called RAM mirror. The reason for the buffer storage
15 is data consistency within the time slices and the relatively large data volume of one time slice. If calculation of a time slice is complete, the data exchange for the next time slice must be completed before it is started. As a result of this time expenditure for the consistent data exchange, a
20 measurable dead time (delay) is built into the system. The signals are all delayed by one time slice, but are absolutely identical in the system.

In the case of the finite state machine illustrated in Figure 4 for synchronizing the time slices in slave 3, after the
25 computer system is restarted (for example after being turned on or following an error), a first state 30 (initialization) is begun. From there, the transition is made to a state 31 (period elapsed, wait for CAN). When the delay time has elapsed, without data being received from data bus 4
30 (condition 32), the transition is made to a state 33 (forced scheduling). A blocking time is then defined in a step 34, and

the transition is made to a state 35 in which no data are read
from data bus 4. Step 34 may be implemented, for example, by:

```
        debounce counter --
        if debounce counter = 0
            {period = prolonged
            reload debounce counter
        } else
            {period = normal}
        blocking time = period - delay time
```

Alternatively, the blocking time may also be calculated as the
sum of the period and delay time. During the blocking time, no
data are received from data bus 4. Finally, the transition is
made again to state 31 (period elapsed, wait for CAN), as soon
as the blocking time has elapsed (condition 36). A blind
window is quasi defined by the blocking time and pushed
through the time-slot pattern by shortening or lengthening the
time slices, until the time-slot pattern of slave 3 conforms
with that of master 2, and the same time slices are executed
time-synchronously in master 2 and slave 3 (to all intents and
purposes, however, with the time lag mentioned above). The
blocking time (the blind window) is used to improve the
interference immunity of the synchronization of control units
2, 3. During the blocking time, no data may arrive via bus 4.
Thus, any unnecessary shortening of the time slice is
prevented.

When, in state 31, data are received from data bus 4 during
the delay time (condition 37, CAN object newData), the
transition is made to a state 38 (start schedule). From there,
in a step 39, the transition may be made to a state 40
(schedule blocked). Step 39 may be implemented, for example,
by:

```
        if debounce counter = 0
            {period = shortened
```

```
                blocking time = blocking time for shortened period
                debounce counter = debounce counter for shortening
          } else
          {period = normal
```
5   blocking time = blocking time for normal period)

In state 40, a blind window is quasi defined, in the case that an error occurs. A decision is made as to whether the period is shortened. In the case that a condition 41 (blocking time elapsed, CAN up-to-date and debounce counter --) is fulfilled,

10   the transition is made to a state 42 (CAN up-to-date, wait for end of period). In state 42, however, slave 3 is not scheduled to observe data bus 4, rather it flags if a CAN message had been completely received at an earlier point in time (i.e., prior to expiration of the time delay). If the period is

15   elapsed (condition 43), slave 3 makes the transition again to state 38. If all messages were not yet received in state 42, due to excessive shortening of the period (condition 44, period expired, CAN old, debounce counter = debounce counter for lengthening), the system reverts to state 31. If a

20   condition 45 (blocking time expired, CAN old and debounce counter = debounce counter for shortening) is fulfilled, slave 3 changes to a state 46 (wait for end of period), where the period is shortened. If all messages were received (condition 47, period expired, CAN up-to-date, debounce counter =

25   debounce counter for shorten), slave 3 reverts to state 38. If all messages were not yet received, due to excessive shortening of the period (condition 48, period expired, CAN old, debounce counter = debounce counter for lengthening), the system reverts to state 31.

30   Thus, in summary, it can be said about the finite state machine from Figure 4 that: Master control unit 2 specifies the time-slot pattern, i.e., it indicates which number time slice should be started by slave control unit 3. If the

numbers of the time slices of master 2 and slave 3 pending
execution differ, the time slices of slave 3 are shortened or
lengthened to a greater or lesser extent, and the computer
system is operated with time slices which vary in length,

5   until the numbers of the time slices of master 2 and slave 3
are identical.

A special data synchronization strategy is used during the
initialization between master 2 and slave 3. During the
initialization process, analog values are measured. These

10   values are used to initialize a PT1 filter. In a master-slave
computer system, the problem arises that the component drivers
access values that are buffer-stored in the read-write memory
(RAM mirror). During the initialization, this read-write
memory does not yet contain any valid values. Thus, the PT1

15   filter is initialized incorrectly.

For that reason, during initialization, the following strategy
is used for purposes of signal acquisition:
a)   During the initialization routine, a request bit is set in
     the status register for all signals contained in the data

20   sets. Thus, in any case, hardware is accessed in response
     to the first invoking (call) of the component driver. This
     first valid signal value is stored in accordance with the
     computer system in the intermediate memory (shadow
     buffer). The component driver utilizes the incorrect value

25   from the read-write memory.
b)   Equalization of the signals of the initialization task
     (reference numeral 30 in Figure 3): Task 30 has a task
     counter 10. It is only executed in response to control
     unit reset. In a signal initialization process, master 2

30   and slave 3 send the CAN data of initialization task 30.
     This process is carried out at the end of the
     initialization to ensure that all hardware accesses of the

initialization are complete, thus that the intermediate
memory is filled with valid values. After sending the data
of initialization task 30, master 2 and slave 3 wait to
receive the data packet. The maximum delay time may be
5   applied via a label. Immediately after receipt, the data
are decoded and thus stored in a separate intermediate
memory. (This code section is run through nearly
simultaneously in master 2 and slave 3. Here, a
synchronization of the time bases is possible in master 2
10   and slave 3.) At this point, each control unit 2, 3 has
all signal values that are valid for the initialization
stored in the intermediate memory.

c)   Updating the signals of initialization task 30: copying
the signal values from the intermediate memory into the
15   read-write memory.

d)   Invoking the initialization process of the signals which
initialize the PT1 filter in the initialization.

e)   Normal operation of the computer system during vehicle
operation of the internal combustion engine (drive mode).

20 If master 2 executes a reset during vehicle operation, it runs
through the initialization (compare above) and sends the data
packet of initialization task 30 to CAN bus 4. Slave 3
receives the data packet. The time-synchronous scheduling
process does not start any task, but sends the data packet to
25 CAN bus 4. Following evaluation of this data packet, master 2
continues its initialization; compare point c) above.

If slave 3 executes a reset during vehicle operation, it runs
through the initialization (compare above) and sends the data
packet of initialization task 30 to CAN bus 4. Master 2
30 receives the data packet. In the time-synchronous master-slave
component driver starting process, it recognizes the data
packet request from slave 3, and does not send the data of the

current task, but rather the data of initialization task 30.
Following evaluation of this data packet, slave 3 continues
its initialization; compare point c) above.

The storing of messages and signals in the computer system
5   according to the present invention is clarified with reference
to Figure 5. In master control unit 2, sensor data 13 from
relevant hardware (sensors 50) are fetched and buffer-stored
in the intermediate memory (shadow buffer 51). To update
sensor data 13 utilized for calculation purposes in master 2
10   in the subsequent time slice, to the updated status, current
sensor data 13 are copied from intermediate memory 51 into a
read-write memory (RAM mirror 52). From this memory, they are
then read out, as needed, by computer programs 54 running on
master 2 and used for calculations (step 55). Moreover,
15   updated sensor data 13 are read out from intermediate memory
51 and buffer-stored (step 57) in a message memory (message
buffer 56). From there, they are then transmitted via a dual
port RAM 58 and data bus 4 to slave control unit 3.

In slave 3, updated sensor data 13 from master 2 are buffer-
20   stored via a dual port RAM 59 in a message memory (message
buffer 60). From there, sensor data 13 are then transferred in
a step 61 into an intermediate memory (shadow buffer 62). To
update sensor data 13 utilized for calculation purposes in
slave 3 in the subsequent time slice, to the updated status,
25   current sensor data 13 received from master 2 are copied from
intermediate memory 62 into a read-write memory (RAM mirror
63). From this memory, they are then read out, as needed, by
computer programs 65 running on slave 3 and used for
calculations (step 66).

30   Moreover, in slave control unit 3, sensor data 13 from
relevant hardware (sensors 67) are fetched and buffer-stored
in intermediate memory (shadow buffer) 62. To update sensor

data 13 utilized for calculation purposes in slave 3 in the subsequent time slice, to the updated status, current sensor data 13 are copied from intermediate memory 62 into read-write memory 63 (step 64). From this memory, they are then read out,

5   as needed, by computer programs 65 running on slave 3 and used for calculations (step 66). Moreover, updated sensor data 13 are read out from intermediate memory 62 and buffer-stored (step 68) in a message memory (message buffer) 60. From there, they are then transmitted via dual port RAM 59 and data bus 4

10   to master control unit 2.

In master 2, updated sensor data 13 from slave 3 are buffer-stored via a dual port RAM 58 in message memory (message buffer) 56. From there, sensor data 13 are then transferred in a step 69 into intermediate memory (shadow buffer) 51. To

15   update sensor data 13 utilized for calculation purposes in master 2 in the subsequent time slice, to the updated status, current sensor data 13 received from slave 3 are copied from intermediate memory 51 into read-write memory 52 (step 53). From this memory, they are then read out, as needed, by

20   computer programs 54 running on master 2 and used for calculations (step 55).

While sensor data 13 of the current time slice (processed at instant n) are stored in intermediate memories 51, 62, the actual execution of computer programs 54, 65 takes place on

25   the basis of sensor data 13 of the preceding time slice (processed at instant n-1). From application software level 7, computer programs 54, 65 send requests 70, 71 for new values for sensor data 13 to hardware driver level 6. The execution of the above described sequences involving steps 50 through 69

30   goes unnoticed by application software level 7. It merely registers new values for sensor data 13 being communicated to it in steps 55 and 66. It is unimportant to application

software level 7 where, precisely, the data come from and whether it is a question of current data or of data of the preceding time slice.

To ensure a correct data exchange between master 2 and slave 3, three different signal/message intermediate memories are required (compare Figure 5):

MS message buffer 56, 60: for buffer-storing complete CAN messages

Shadow buffer 51, 62: for buffer-storing individual signals, until all signals of a 20 ms/100 ms time slice are exchanged. Within the framework of receiving messages, sending messages, and up-dating the RAM mirror, the shadow buffer is accessed exclusively via the master slave driver.

RAM mirror 52, 63: contains all signals used for the current calculations. Signal accesses are made to this buffer instead of to the hardware (for example, A/D converter).

To ensure data consistency already during run-up of control units 2, 3, a special strategy was developed for synchronizing selected data prior to the actual start of the computer program. It is advantageous in this context for a very particular instant to be executed simultaneously (in the 100 microsecond range) in the computer program of master 2 and slave 3. This makes it possible for the time bases of individual control units 2, 3 to be adjusted. Thus, for example, glow-plug control signals in master 2 and slave 3 may be precisely interleaved in order to minimize drops in the battery voltage.

Besides the sensor data, any data at all from the application software may be included as so-called user signals in this signal exchange. However, these signals are not buffer-stored in order not to unnecessarily degrade their timeliness (up-to-

5   date status). Depending on the selection of the transmission instant, these signals may also be used identically in the master and slave time slice.

It is possible to shift sensors or actuators to the other control unit while expending relatively little outlay for

10   changing the configuration, since all actuator values in both control units 2, 3 are calculated, and the output stage errors are coupled.

The security concept of the master slave system will not be discussed in greater detail at this point. A few key points

15   are merely listed exemplarily in the following:
-        CAN bus hardware monitoring;
-        CAN bus data monitoring for receiving and sending;
-        CAN bus data monitoring using the checksum (method) for a complete data packet;

20   -   monitoring the correct time slice sequence in each control unit 2, 3;
-        monitoring the correct time slice sequence of slave 3 by master 2; and
-        recognizing a control unit reset during operation by the

25   other control unit.

Both control units 2, 3 execute the same computer program synchronously with a settable time lag and are able to access the same sensor data 13. Thus, in these respects, it is actually a master-master design.

30   Figure 6 shows a system diagram illustrating another exemplary embodiment of the computer system according to the present

invention, including the sensor and actuator technology used. In comparison to the exemplary embodiment shown in Figure 3, in the exemplary embodiment illustrated here, missing in master 2 is a sensor 13.7 for measuring the oil temperature, a sensor 13.9 for measuring the exhaust-gas temperature, as well as a sensor 13.16 for the glow element feedback signal, a crash sensor 13.17, a low-idle (fuel-tank empty) switch 13.18, a switch 13.19 for indicating the status (open, closed) of the fuel-tank cap, a switch 13.20 for indicating a request for auxiliary heating, a sensor 13.21 for the auxiliary heater consumption signal, a sensor 13.22 for heat demand, a rapeseed methyl sensor 13.23, a sensor 13.24 for the differential pressure in the particulate filter, and a lambda probe 13.25. In addition, in the exemplary embodiment shown in Figure 6, a switch 13.28 is provided for a MIL (malfunction indication lamp) request and a switch 13.29 for the status of a time-delay relay for preheating. In the case of slave 3, a sensor 14.9 is missing for the exhaust-gas temperature, as well as a sensor 14.16 for the glow element feedback signal, a sensor 14.24 for the differential pressure in the particulate filter and a lambda probe 14.25.

The actuators, which are driven by master 2 via power output stages 11, do not include a fuel tank shut-off valve 16.2, a start controller 16.3, a generator shutoff 16.4, an air-conditioner demand 16.5, a radiator thermostatic control 16.7, a fan control 16.10, an electrical cooling-water pump 16.12, a catalyst heating 16.13, an additive metering pump 16.14, a supplemental relay 16.15, an auxiliary-heater burner control 16.16, an exhaust gas recirculation cooling 16.19 or a sheathed-element glow plug control unit 16.21. Provided, instead, are actuators for a radiator fan bypass/shut-off relay 16.22, a replenishing pump 16.23, a radiator-fan charge air 16.24, a hydraulic radiator fan 16.25, a radiator

thermostat heating 16.26, and an air-conditioner shutoff
16.27. The actuators, which are driven by slave 3, do not
include a glow plug relay 17.11, a catalyst heating 17.13, an
exhaust gas recirculation cooling 17.19 or a sheathed-element

5   glow plug control unit 17.21. The data (reference numeral 21)
transmitted via data bus 4 between master 2 and slave 3
relate, in particular, to the volume, i.e., the trailing-
throttle status, a cylinder counter, a control status, as well
as input variables for exhaust gas recirculation and boost-

10   pressure control.

Functions 9 of master 2 do not include any exhaust gas
aftertreatment and, instead of a starting torque, a starting-
fuel quantity is considered. Functions 9 of slave 3 do not
relate to the starting torque, the idle-speed control, the

15   torque control and limitation, the external torque
intervention, the engine-smoothness regulator, the active
surge damper, the exhaust gas aftertreatment, the fuel cooling
control, the vehicle-speed controller (cruise control), the
engine mount control, the air-conditioner compressor control,

20   the glow-time control or the vehicle immobilizing system.

Although the functional scopes of master 2 and slave 3 in the
exemplary embodiment illustrated in Figure 6 are relatively
substantially distinguished from one another, the same
computer programs still run in both control units 2, 3, in

25   slave 3, not all values calculated by the computer programs
being used for driving actuators 17 or for fulfilling the
control and/or regulation function. However, this does not
change the fact that, in the computer system of Figure 6 as
well, the same computer programs are executed time-

30   synchronously in master 2 and slave 3 with a settable time
lag, and that the same sensor data are available in master 2
and slave 3.

The errors for sensors 13, 14 and actuators 16, 17 are stored separately in master 2 and slave 3. The stored information pertaining to the occurrence of an error may be exchanged and, respectively, synchronized between master 2 and slave 3.

5   However, information pertaining to the circumstances of the error (such as when, what, where) remain in the error memories and is not synchronized. To be able to read out the error memories via diagnosis interfaces 19.1, 20.1 for maintenance purposes, the error memories must be addressable via different

10   addresses (so-called wake-up addresses). This is necessary since the software of master 2 and of slave 3 is otherwise identical. The error memories may be read out via diagnosis interfaces 19.1, 20.1, for example, via a CAN bus (KWP2000) or via a serial interface (K line).

15   In the master-slave systems described exemplarily in the figures, two control units 2, 3 are interconnected via a CAN bus 4. Sensors 13, 14 are only partially linked to one control unit 2, 3. Thus, while maintaining the data consistency, the sensor data must be transmitted within the time-synchronous

20   tasks from one control unit 2; 3 to the other control unit 3; 2.

The data multiplexing of the CAN messages is carried out using data identifiers (data IDs). The messages used for equalizing sensors 13 in the master-slave system have the following

25   structure:

CAN ID	data ID	data	data	data	data	data	data	data

The time-synchronous message transmission is carried out in the present exemplary embodiments in a 10 ms pattern.

In the process, a block of CAN messages is always exchanged between control units 2, 3. The end of the block and thus the end of the data transmission is recognized by way of a defined CAN identifier. This CAN identifier is sent exclusively as the

5   last message in the CAN transmission block. The last CAN message has the following structure:

Special CAN ID	data ID	CS	task counter	data	data	data	data	data

Data ID: multiplexing information

10   CS: check sum of all message bytes of a
                              transmission block
       Task counter: scheduling information / time-slice
                              counter

An example of a CAN transmission block:

15

transmission sequence	CAN ID	message contents	multiplexing between the 10 ms tasks
1	401	data	yes
2	402	data	yes
3	403	data	yes
last	404	CS, task counter, data	yes

In the exemplary embodiments described above, the 20 ms tasks (MS_Task20) and the 100 ms tasks (MS_Task100_0 through MS_Task100_9) in both control units 2, 3 are subdivided into

20   10 ms parts (time slots 70, 71) and scheduled in the 10 ms time-slot pattern. This means that, after 20 ms, all parts of the 20 ms task and, after 100 ms, all parts of the 100 ms task

are carried out (compare the breakdown and processing of the time slices in Figure 7). Master control unit 2 sends CAN messages every 10 ms in order to transfer the measured sensor data 13 of master control unit 2 to slave control unit 3. In

5   this CAN transmission, the information on which time slice in master 2 is currently being executed, is transmitted along with the other information in the form of a counter (task counter). This number of the current time slice that is sent along is indicated within the 100 ms tasks (MS_Task100_0

10   through MS_Task100_9) (#i, i = 0 through 9). Slave control unit 3 synchronizes the start of its 10 ms task using the finite state machine illustrated in Figure 4. Slave control unit 3 transfers the counter for the current 10 ms time slice to master control unit 2. In this manner, the master is able

15   to monitor the sequence of the time slices in slave 3.

The data exchange in the master-slave system is explained in greater detail with reference to Figure 8. Sensor data x1 through x5 are processed as input signals in the computer programs of master 2 and slave 3, sensor data x1 and x2 being

20   directly available at master 2 and sensor data x3 through x5 being directly available at slave 3. n denotes the time base of the 20 ms task; m the time base of the 100 ms task. Sensor data x1 through x4 are processed in the 20 ms task, whereas sensor data x5 are processed in the 100 ms task. Reference

25   numeral R in Figure 8 signifies that a data-update request bit is set. In Figure 8, master 2 is shown in the top half and slave 3 in the bottom half.

In a time slice n, data are initially processed in a 10 ms time slot #8 (reference numeral 81), and then in a 10 ms time

30   slot #9. At the beginning of a time slot 81, a master-slave starting procedure 82 is executed, as well as a master-slave transmitting procedure 83 for data transmission.

In time slot #8, intermediate memory 51 of master 2 contains sensor data xl(n) and x2(n) of the current 20 ms time slice n. Moreover, it contains sensor data x3(n-1) and x4(n-1) of the preceding 20 ms time slice n-1. Sensor data x4(n-1) were transmitted in the preceding time slice n-1 from slave 3 to master 2 and stored there in intermediate memory 51. Finally, intermediate memory 51 also contains sensor data x5(m-1) of the preceding 100 ms time slice m-1. In addition, in time slot #8, read-write memory 51 of master 2 contains sensor data xl(n-1), x2(n-1), x3(n-1), x4(n-1) of the preceding 20 ms time slice n-1, as well as sensor data x5(m-1) of the preceding 100 ms time slice m-1.

The computer programs in slave 3 are executed in time slices time-synchronously with a settable time lag 80 relative to master 2. Intermediate memory 62 of slave 3 contains sensor data xl(n), x3(n) and x4(n) in time slice n that is delayed by time lag 80, data x3(n) and x4(n) being directly available at slave 3. Sensor data xl(n) were transmitted during time lag 80 in a CAN message from master 2 to slave 3 and stored there in intermediate memory 62. In addition, intermediate memory 62 contains sensor data x2(n-1) of the preceding 20 ms time slice n-1, as well as sensor data x5(m) of the current 100 ms time slice m. Values xl(n-1), x2(n-1), x3(n-1), x4(n-1) and x5(m-1) of the preceding time slices n-1, m-1 are still stored in read-write memory 63. Current sensor data x3(n) and x5(m), that slave 3 had just read in from sensors 13, are transmitted from slave 3 to master 2 and stored there in intermediate memory 51.

In time slot #9, current sensor data x2(n), that master 2 had just read in from sensors 13, are transmitted in a CAN message to slave 3. In the same way, current sensor data x4(n), that slave 3 had just read in from sensors 13, are transmitted in a

CAN message to master 2. Thus, all current sensor data xl(n) through x4(n) and x5(m) are available in both control units 2, 3. In subsequent time slice n+1, current sensor data are transmitted into read-write memories 52, 63 of master 2 and of slave 3, where they are available for execution of the computer programs.

Moreover, in time slice n+1, current sensor data xl(n+1), x2(n+2) are again read in from master 2 and current sensor data x3(n+1), x4(n+1) from slave 3 directly from sensors 13 and transmitted in time slots #0 and #1 via CAN data bus 4 to the respective other control unit 3; 2, so that, at subsequent time slot n+2, current sensor data xl(n+1) through x4(n+1), as well as x5(m) are available for execution of the computer programs. Sensor data x5 are read in only in every fifth time slice from slave 3, thus, the next time, again in time slice n+5.